Cultural Plan's Future Bright, Says Burgard

By RICK CHATENEVER
Sentinel Staff Writer

Arts consultant Ralph Burgard chaired his last meeting with representatives of local arts organizations Tuesday night, saying that the county's Cultural Action Plan "has a chance of being the best plan to ever hit the state of California."

He also predicted success at raising the quarter-million dollar budget for the county's new Cultural Council on the state level and from local sources, even "in these difficult times."

Burgard was meeting with members of the action plan's Resource Committee at the Louden Nelson Center. The Resource Committee — made up of representatives of local arts and cultural institutions — will become the "Council Associates" advising the Board of Directors of the new Cultural Council, according to the proposed bylaws that Burgard presented at the meeting.

The agenda for Tuesday's meeting had been carried over from the previous meeting of the Resource Committee, where members voiced concern that artists and arts groups in the community weren't being given enough power in the proposed Cultural Council. Watsonville artist Ralph D'Oliveira characterized the almost 50 prominent county residents being considered for membership on the Board of Directors as an "elitist" group. Others present characterized themselves as "the drones' committee."

Burgard acknowledged that one of the functions of the Cultural Associates would be "gossip," but emphasized the importance of local artists and groups in influencing policy for the proposed council.

Saying that "this is the best Resource Committee I've ever encountered," Burgard added that he had seen "more participation from this level than in any other plan I've ever encountered."

A job description has been sent to arts organizations around the country announcing the position of the council's executive director which will begin Aug. 1. Burgard called the filling of this position, which carries a salary of $25,000 to $35,000, "a critical point" in the success of the plan.

His comments about recruitment of an executive director came in response to concern from D'Oliveira about "what happens when the consultant leaves town?"

Burgard responded that the proposed plan contained "built-in perpetuating mechanisms," saying the council has the goal of raising $5,000 each from 20 local firms on an "annual solicitation" basis.

He also reported that the council's request for $75,000 in county funds "looks good" for the next fiscal year, and said that prospects were also good for money from the state Arts Council.

In answer to D'Oliveira's suggestion that "once you're gone, the magic's gone," Burgard said that of the 15 community arts programs he had developed over the last 10 years, "only two failed to get off the ground."

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